

DRAFT

City of Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, Council Chambers, 795 Mass Ave
April 13, 2016 - Minutes Taken by Meera Singh

Members present: Keith Cialino, Debby Galef, Rob Gogan, Susy Jones, Debby Knight, Janet Mosley, Meera Singh, Joanna Vanden, Mary Verhage.

Members absent: Laura Nichols

Staff present: Meryl Brott, John Fitzgerald, Michael Orr

Guests: Judy Nathans, Helen Snively

1. Housekeeping

Public comment: No public was present when the meeting started.

The March 2016 minutes were approved.

2. City Updates

BYOB Ordinance: Mike gave an update which was mostly positive.

Almost all businesses are in compliance.

Whole Foods anecdotally said they had a 50% reduction in paper bags.

Approximately 5,500 reusable bags have been donated by Whole Foods, the Boston Convention Center, Star/Shaw's markets and the public.

Cambridge food pantries and Cambridge Housing Authority residents have received bags from these donations.

An adjustment in behavior is already being seen.

The City of Cambridge will produce reusable bags with logos by mid-May.

Some businesses may donate the proceeds of its 10 cents fee collection to Ocean River Institute. Whole Foods is donating 10 cent charges from the month of April to CitySprouts.

Mattress Recycling: John Fitzgerald reported DPW had declined the DEP's 2016 grant to facilitate mattress collection and processing beginning September 2016. DPW is in the process of putting out an RFP for Solid Waste Management (SWM) for the city, which would include a mattress management plan.

This brought up the question as to whether there should be a fee for curbside collection of bulky items. John said this was also a component of the SWM RFP. The city is to hire a consultant to map out a master plan for the city's SWM.

It was noted that charging fees for bulky item collection would be considered in the SWM master plan.

Curbside Organics: Mike shared current stats for the program of participating and non-participating households: 1363 bins put out on April 11, from 2000 - 2500 households, the highest number to date. 173 tons of organics have been collected during the past 6 months, averaging 6.6 tons/week diverted from the trash.

Volunteers are needed for composting outreach canvassing set for April 25 and 26 from 5:30 PM to 8 PM and April 30 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, targeting households that are not participating.

A waste audit was done at Casella on April 5. Households that are not composting could also be recycling more.

Legislative update: John shared info on six current bills put forth for legislation with the purpose of the RAC to pick one or more to work on:

- i) An Act relative to the digital right to repair
- ii) An Act to reinstate the Clean Environment Fund
- iii) An Act establishing the commission on Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)
- iv) An Act improving recycling in the Commonwealth
- v) An Act to reduce solid waste and provide universal recycling access
- vi) An Act reducing packaging waste in the Commonwealth

RAC members are to think of which one/s they would like to focus on. Mike will schedule a sub-committee meeting for this purpose.

Meryl reported that a Pharmaceutical EPR bill passed recently and will take effect January 2017. She also reported that there is a Massachusetts Product Stewardship Council, and its focus areas are electronics, pharmaceuticals and paint.

3. Polystyrene Sub-committee Discussion

A good discussion on the polystyrene ordinance took place.

Owen has requested the RAC write him a letter stating our views after our May meeting, which is when the Sierra Club will explain their views on the ordinance.

Janet shared info from the Life Cycle Analysis perspective – various studies showing how hard it is to prove the benefits of banning all polystyrene disposable food containers.

What are the environmental merits of the ordinance?

What are the waste and recycling merits?

Keith led a discussion on what the RAC's objectives and concerns are regarding the ordinance:

- Overall reduction in waste
- Long-term shift to reusable containers/utensils
- Health impact of materials – climate change, human health
- Need to hear from the city's Health Commission as well as the Sierra Club
- Public education and awareness
- Guidance on better alternatives
- Time for implementation in city departments

DPW will share updates in May RAC meeting if any feedback is received from businesses about the ordinance.

Mike reported that he recently met with Cambridge Local First to work on developing a survey to collect data for the polystyrene ordinance. There are about 400 members, 350 of which are in food service.

4. Action Items

- i) Sign up for April 25, 26 and 30 compost outreach
- ii) Send Mike your preference for what sub-committee you want to be on for legislative bills
- iii) Mike to set up legislative sub-committee meetings

Draft of potential letter from RAC to Commissioner O’Riordan regarding the polystyrene ordinance – for discussion at April and May RAC meetings

DATE

Commissioner O’Riordan,

The Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee has had continued discussions about Ordinance 1374: “Prohibition on the Use of Polystyrene Based Disposable Food Containers” (polystyrene ordinance) following our letter to you dated January 19, 2016. After further research and discussion, we recommend the following course of action.

[RAC to pick/modify one of the following]

Option 1 – no change:

We, the members of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, support the polystyrene ordinance as written.

Option 2 – foam/expanded polystyrene only:

We, the members of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, would like to recommend a modification of the polystyrene ordinance. While we appreciate the intentions of the ordinance as written, we have concerns about the banning of all polystyrene containers from food service establishments. We recommend that the City revise the ordinance to ban polystyrene foam (expanded polystyrene) only.

Option 3 – all polystyrene banned, implemented over 2 year timeframe:

We, the members of the Cambridge Recycling Advisory Committee, would like to recommend a modification of the polystyrene ordinance. While we appreciate the intentions of the ordinance as written, we have concerns about the timeline to implement the ban. We recommend that the City revise the ordinance to include a stepped implementation schedule, with the polystyrene foam (expanded polystyrene) ban going into effect in October 2016, and rigid/oriented polystyrene in October 2017.

The end goal of the polystyrene ordinance should be to increase recycling, and reduce waste and greenhouse gases in Cambridge.

[RAC to review/modify supporting information below for choice selected above]

Supporting info for Option 1:

Our research has also led us to recommend the following steps that the City can take, even if no changes are made to the ordinance:

- Businesses should be encouraged to utilize xyz type of takeout containers.
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Supporting info for Option 2:

Expanded polystyrene is often not profitable to recycle, and can contaminate curbside recycling. Rigid polystyrene is recyclable, and businesses should be encouraged to educate customers about this fact. Smaller

items, like utensils, straws, and lids, may escape the recycling stream due to size, regardless of the type of material they are made from.

A ban on polystyrene items from food service establishments may result in a switch to either compostable containers or other types of plastic containers, like polypropylene. There are several issues with this switch. Cambridge does not currently have city-wide curbside compost pickup. Even if it did, there could be issues with compost contamination if compostable service-ware is included. Polypropylene containers are more profitable to recycle, but simply switching from polystyrene to polypropylene containers does not automatically lead to increased recycling rates.

Supporting info for Option 3:

A stepped implementation would allow more time for outreach to businesses to implement the ordinance. In addition, it would give the City additional time to recommend suitable alternatives to expanded and rigid polystyrene containers that are either recyclable or compostable (contingent on city-wide curbside compost pickup as a disposal option).

Thank you for your consideration of our recommended course of action. The Recycling Advisory Committee discussed and voted (___ yeas, ___ nays, ___ abstaining) to support this recommendation at the [April 13, 2016] meeting of the Recycling Advisory Committee.